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Internet Filters in Schools: A Teacher's Handbook

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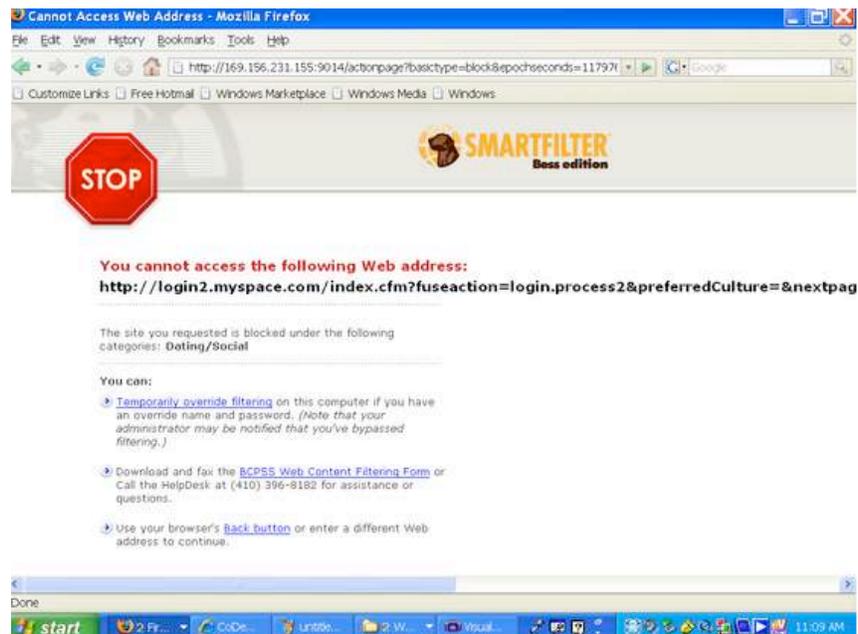
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Abstract

This paper offers teachers and librarians practical information regarding the negative effects of the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and its required Internet filtering on education, and on how to ameliorate the impact. The paper provides background, relevant legal information, a description of how filters work, and conclusions regarding their general effects on students. Various egregious influences of filtering on minority student populations are examined, including effects on poor, ethnic, and LGBT students. The author concludes with a personalized list of steps teachers and librarians can take to mitigate the negative aspects of CIPA and filtering software, and a plea for the importance of Internet literacy education.

Introduction

A group of high school debaters is assigned the topic of revising the Second Amendment. A teacher plans a complicated lesson on the Dust Bowl, with illustrations from Dorothea Lange's photographs available on the Internet. An anxious student alone in the school library searches the Internet for information on safe sex. What will they find in common?



Anyone who spends time in an American public school is familiar with pages like this. School computers, like those in public libraries, many businesses, and some private homes, are usually regulated by some form of Internet filtering or blocking software, which prevents access to certain sites, either through blocking content concerning specific words or phrases, or blocking specific listed addresses [URL's] (Rubin, 2004). Since legislation passed in 2000 requiring libraries receiving federal funding to install blocking software on all computers, filters have become a fact of life for most public school teachers, students, and librarians. This paper contends that filtering, even after recent refinements in technology, still denies students access to

useful and legitimate information, and is frequently in violation of Constitutionally protected rights for youth. The ability to override blocking software, which was deemed crucial by the Supreme Court, is usually not available in public schools. The filtering software has a disproportionate negative effect on certain marginalized groups such as poor, ethnic, or gay/lesbian/transgender students. According to the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, the school library media specialist has the responsibility to resist censorship and protect access to information (AASL, 2008)—the school librarian should be the guardian of Internet rights in a school, but this does not always happen. This paper provides resources to the teacher or inexperienced library media specialist seeking to mitigate the effects of mandated filters on student learning and access to information. This paper will provide legal background, filtering system information, practical advice, and future concerns concerning school internet filters.

Background

The World Wide Web went public in 1990 (Elon University/Pew Internet Project, n.d.), and among the earliest entrepreneurs making use of the new financial opportunity were the online porn industry (Sprenger, 1999) and the education market. From the beginning of the personal computer era, schools have been in a tail-chasing race with themselves, both to introduce new technology and to ban access to it. Sutton reports that as early as 1996, a debate carried in *Electronic School* predicted that schools which opened Internet access to their students would end up limiting it through fear of students' coming into contact with explicit, violent, or hate-based content (2006). Concerned adults demanded a way to protect vulnerable youth from content considered inappropriate in their communities, and a new industry was born. By the late 90's there were at least a dozen Internet filtering systems available for homes, libraries, businesses, or schools (Hansen, 2003), and profits for a typical filtering software company were

growing at a rate of 10% a year (Washington Technology, 1996). Considering that one of the most frequent reasons web sites are blocked by filters is because the web sites contain “criticism of filtering software” (Heins, Cho, & Feldman, p.1, 2006), it is disturbingly difficult to find data on profits for filtering software companies, but in the 1990’s, when Minnesota legislators considered installing blocking software for schools in the state, the cost was estimated at 57 million for that state alone (Pownell & Bailey, n.d.). According to the National School Boards Foundation, over 90% of American schools used some sort of filtering technology by 2002 (Sutton, 2006). As current practices for Internet filtering are examined, and future legal challenges are considered, it should not be forgotten that many businesses have a financial interest in limiting access to the Internet.

Filtering systems and companies differ; a working knowledge of the basic types available to schools is an important tool for teachers and librarians. There are several different types of Internet blocking systems available today. Filtering software can be ‘client based’--installed either on an individual computer, typical of in-home, parent installed software, or, more commonly for schools, libraries, and businesses, ‘server based’—installed on the server to regulate all individual computers on that system. Some Internet Service Providers also offer filtering services. The location of the filtering system will affect the type and amount of local control and over-ride available (Ayre, 2004). The earliest and most simple form of filter is the keyword block. These filters use a predetermined list of words considered objectionable—usually words related to sex. Early versions simply removed the objectionable word from the text displayed, resulting in lots of good fun, when, for example, the sentence “The Catholic Church opposes homosexual marriage” was altered by the software to read “The Catholic Church opposes marriage”(Ayre, p.8, 2004). More sophisticated and now more common systems use site

blocking, which means they prevent access to a certain URL (uniform resource locator) or web address. If a URL is found by algorithmic or human screening to contain proscribed content, it will be added to the list of blocked sites. Some filters also block by ISP in some circumstances; this was in the news this week (December, 2008), when Wikipedia was blocked in the United Kingdom for several days by a confused filter system (Clayton, 2008). Software companies make the lists of prohibited content types; purchasers sometimes have some ability to customize the list governing their system(Schneider, 1997). Typical categories for schools would include “Sexuality” or “Adult”, and also, more recently, “Social Network”. It’s interesting to note that businesses also are extremely interested in blocking sexual content from employees, due partly to concerns about harassment litigation. Blocking of employee workstations is a growing market for software companies, with “Sports”, “Humor”, and other time-wasting sources of cubicle entertainment also frequently blocked. Informal surveys estimate that Facebook and YouTube are blocked by at least 25% of major American corporations (Scott, 2008).

Filters initially operate by searching the World Wide Web, or "harvesting," for possibly inappropriate sites, largely relying on key words and phrases. There follows a process of "winnowing," which also relies largely on these mechanical techniques. (Heins, Cho, & Feldman, 2006). Though most filtering companies claim that humans check over the mechanical winnowing, many legendary faux pas of filtering seem to belie this claim, as when Congressman Dick Armey’s website was blocked, or the University of Kansas’s Archie R. Dykes Medical Library (Sutton, 2006)— or, a perhaps legendary favorite, when the Flesh County Public Library filtered out its own website.

Although purchasing customers can typically customize the prohibited categories lists for

their own system, choosing, for example, whether to block or allow “Social Networking” sites, the exact lists of specific URL’s included by the software company under any given category are closely guarded secrets, as a large number of categorized sites is an advantageous asset for the filter company. Problems associated with overblocking or inappropriate blocking will be discussed further later in the paper, but the lack of transparency surrounding URL lists is an important related area of concern for intellectual freedom.

Legalities

Like a booming frontier city, the unrestricted Internet grew in the early 90’s, offering its new digital citizens all the attractions of culture and learning, but also easy access to vice and extremism. In any frontier town, the churches and the law always arrive soon after the pioneers; no sooner did Internet use begin to grow than efforts to regulate its offerings also developed, focusing especially on protecting children from exposure to inappropriate content. Legislators expressed concern with limiting racist or hate-speech, and also egregiously violent content, but, as Trecky Monster sings persuasively in *Avenue Q*, “The Internet is for porn”, and limiting access to sexual content has always been the primary aim of Internet legislation (Schneider, 1997). Ironically, much of the power of commercial filtering companies has its origin in efforts to limit legislative restrictions on the Internet. In 1996, Congress passed the Telecommunications Act, a portion of which, the Communications Decency Act (CDA), criminalized all “indecent” or “patently offensive” communications online. This clearly unconstitutional provision survived only one year before the Supreme Court supported a First Amendment challenge; the Clinton administration, in response, proposed a campaign to increase self-imposed Internet filtering (The Free Expression Policy Project, 2008).

In 1998 Congress tried again, with the Child Online Privacy Protection Act (COPA), which required credit-card certifications and access codes that restricted viewing of a wide range of Internet material. The federal district court ruled this law unconstitutional and granted a permanent injunction against enforcement, which is still in effect. In a third attempt the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) was passed.

Under the Telecommunications Act, the legislature authorizes reduced rates (e-rates) for school, libraries, and hospitals for Internet access. After CIPA, in order to receive the e-rate and certain other federal funding, institutions must install Technology Protection Measures (TPM's)—filters--on all computers with Internet access. These filters must protect against access to images which are obscene, pornographic, or harmful to minors. Participating libraries are also required to have an Internet safety policy, and to hold a public meeting to review that policy (Boucher, 2004). In order to continue to provide unfiltered Internet access, school and public libraries would have to forego e-rate discounts and federal funding. In 2002 alone, almost \$60 million in discounts was provided, and \$150 million in grants—clearly few libraries can afford to lose this funding (Rubin 2004).

The collection of Supreme Court cases relating to students' rights at schools is also relevant to Internet filtering. In *Tinker v. Des Moines*, 1969, several students had been suspended for wearing black armbands to school in protest of U.S. policy in Vietnam. In ruling on this case the Supreme Court famously stated that “Students do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate (*Tinker v. Des Moines*, 1969). Only conduct deemed disruptive of the work and discipline of the school can be legitimately regulated by school authorities.

In 1982, in a case which continues to have important repercussions for legal issues regarding information access in schools, the Supreme Court handed down a ruling in *Board of Education, Island Trees, New York v. Pico* (457 U.S. 853, 867, [1982]). In this case, the Court ruled that students have a right to receive ideas and read controversial material in the school library as a corollary of rights of free speech and press. *Pico* also recognized that student use of school libraries is of two sorts: for curricularly related research, but also for personal, self-directed interests (Peltz, 2005). *Pico* has survived the ruling in favor of CIPA, and Lukenbill notes that its influence “has slowly begun to appear in court rulings and legal reviews relating to both school libraries and other information access issues (Lukenbill, 2007, Court Rulings Concerning School Library Media Censorship section, ¶ 14). The recognition that school library use is not confined to what is necessary for dictated curriculum holds promise as a future tactic in the battle for intellectual freedom in schools (Peltz, 2005).

As the makeup of the court and the national tenor changed in the last decade, *Tinker* has been diminished. Recently, in the much-reported “Bong Hits 4 Jesus” case (*Morse and the Juneau School Board et al. v. Frederick*), the court ruled that certain areas of speech, such as speech which seems to glorify drug use, are not protected within a school environment (Lukenbill, 2007). More importantly, to the shock of the ALA, the ACLU and other free speech advocacy groups, in 2003 the Rehnquist Court upheld CIPA in a plurality opinion (*United States et al. v. American Library Association* 539 U.S. 194 [2003]), thus allowing filters on computers for both adults and children in libraries. Schools were not a party in this decision, and *Pico* was not invalidated. The main justifications of the Court in upholding CIPA were that filters on pornography could be seen as analogous to the library’s traditional role in choosing material for the collection; that the filter could be readily disabled at any

appropriate request, and that libraries dissatisfied with the restrictions had the option to reject the federal funding (Office for Intellectual Freedom, 2006). It was also pointed out by the justices that the ruling pertained to the law *as written*; nothing prohibited a future challenge to the law *as applied* (Sutton, 2006). These elements of *US v. ALA* will be further discussed, and also hold promise for future legal challenges to CIPA.

In spite of their defeat in *US v. ALA*, the American Library Association has been an important player in the Internet filter game. Strangely, according to some observers, the ACLU has been reluctant to wage a legal assault on what supporters have oddly called “user empowerment tools”, because they enthusiastically supported the availability of such self-imposed filters in defeating CDA and COPA. The ALA, on the other hand, has opposed Internet filters from the beginning as “incapable of blocking sites containing the targeted content without also blocking sites that were never intended to be excluded” (Office for Intellectual Freedom, p.348). Many inspirational documents are available from the ALA, including *The Resolution on the Use of Filtering in Libraries*, which affirms “that the use of filtering software by libraries to block access to constitutionally protected speech violates the *Library Bill of Rights*” (ALA, 2008), and the entire *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, which collects policies, resolutions, and related articles into one volume. Especially relevant to a discussion of school Internet use is the American Association of School Librarian’s pamphlet on intellectual freedom, which affirms special protections for minors using libraries, and promises assistance with filtering issues (AASL, 2008). These are stirring documents which clearly articulate the primacy and importance of intellectual freedom. It must be said, however, that the rhetoric of the ALA is not always the most useful support for school personnel. Teachers and library media specialists alike will find little practical advice on the

ALA website for mitigating the effects of CIPA. It is now more than 5 years since the ALA lost in *U.S. v. ALA*; many of the links for filter issues on the ALA and other Internet freedom advocacy web sites no longer work (though to be fair, the entire ALA website is being remodeled). In the meantime filters have become entrenched.

Do we Need Filters?

Estabrook and Lakner (2000) report some interesting statistics on complaints about Internet content in libraries. The Library Research Center of the University of Illinois surveyed a large sampling of US public libraries. Formal complaints about Internet content were reported by fewer than 20% of libraries. Librarians estimated that approximately one third of those complaints came from people who had not actually used the computers in the library, but had only heard that the Internet was available there. The 2002 Nation Research Council report on pornography and youth found that European youth, though exposed at a much younger age to nudity and explicit material, do not show a higher level of teen pregnancy, sexual addiction, or other problematic sexual behaviors (Thornburgh & Lin, 2002). According to last year's Parks Associates (2007) National Technology Scan, almost 70% of all American households have Internet access, yet the Pew Internet and American Life Project found in 2005 that fewer than 12 million of America's more than 33 million teens (Market Research.com, 2005) live in homes with Internet filters (Government Technology). Though 25% of youth using the Internet regularly in 2003 reported unwanted viewing of sexually explicit material, 76% of these regarded the exposure as a minor nuisance (Estabrook & Lakner, 2000). Few researchers, and perhaps fewer school personnel, have "dared to question the assumption that children were irreparably harmed by exposure to explicit sexual

materials” (Sutton,2006, p.22). At any rate, as long as CIPA remains unchallenged in the courts, the question of the actual harms of unfiltered Internet is academic only.

Filters—“Good Enough?”

Thornburgh, in the Introduction to the National Research Council’s massive 2002 report: *Youth, Pornography, and the Internet*, emphasizes social and educational strategies “to reduce the number of children who are strongly motivated to obtain inappropriate sexually explicit materials.” Though looking as well at hate-speech, violent content, etc., the report focuses primarily on sexual material. This intelligent, sophisticated, and thorough report proposes a thoughtful approach to the problem of defining ‘pornography’. The writers suggest that interested adults go to the Internet and type in ‘rape’, ‘bondage’, or similar terms, combined with ‘jpg’ or ‘api’, and then examine what is available (Thornburgh & Lin, 2002).

Brown, in an ethnographic study of Internet use by poor students of color in a large urban high school, studied adult Internet supervision in a typical public school. In a campus of more than 4,000 students, large groups of whom moved through the library each day on a staggered schedule, with free periods and curricular library use interspersed, one library media specialist with two part-time aides was charged with maintaining adult vigilance over student Internet use. Clearly, the most vicious and disturbing material imaginable is only a click away, and though three quarters of students in the study cited above from Estabrook and Lakner (2002) were undismayed by their accidental brush with obscene material, the remaining 25% characterized themselves as “seriously disturbed” by what they had seen. Lori Ayre (2005), an important expert on filtering technology, says many libraries have found that filters, though not perfect, are “good enough” to alleviate the serious problems of inappropriate access in the

library at the small cost of occasional overblocking. Skip Auld, a Virginia librarian who had been adamantly opposed to filtering, clearly communicates his impression after experiencing a filtered public library in his article's title: "Filters Work: Get Over It", in which he discusses his "hope to convince ALA to revise or revoke its unwavering condemnation of blocking software"(p.38).

Why We Can't Get Over It

In the years since *US v. ALA*, many have noticed that "the topic of Internet filtering in libraries has gone to the back burner" (Sutton, p.xxiii, 2006). By 2005, the Department of Education estimated that 90% of K-12 schools were using some sort of CIPA compliant filter (Heins, Cho, & Feldman, 2006). Even many links on Peacefire.org, a passionate anti-filtering activist group's website, have gone dead. In his useful overview on choosing filter software, Hansen (2003) points out that, compared to factors such as language, social structures, and computer literacy, filters play a very small role as barriers to information. However, in their ongoing negative effects on students, teachers, and learning in schools, filters still do serious harm. It is the duty of school personnel to take action possible within the law to mitigate this damage.

One of the most iniquitous effects of Internet filtration is its disproportionate impact on some of the more vulnerable groups in society—impoverished students, ethnic students, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) students. Sutton provides an overview of research on the 'digital divide'. A study by the National Center for Education Statistics shows that, among students who can access a computer at only one location, 52% from families in poverty, and 59% with parents who are not high school graduates use the computer at school.

Clearly, a limit on Internet access impacts these students more severely than it does affluent students with smart phones in their pockets and broadband at home. Also, wealthier schools are able to forego the e-rate if they choose not to filter, while underfunded schools in lower socio-economic areas do not have that option.

In addition to the poor, students of color are unjustly impacted by Internet filters. Brown conducted an ethnographic study of information and computer technology use at a large urban Northeastern high school. Based on her study of a group of low-income twelfth-grade students of mixed gender and ethnicity, whose library access is controlled by an Internet filter and three white female library staff members, Brown finds that the exclusions of both the officially 'excluded' websites blocked by the school district-wide filter, and the 'ad-hoc' restricted websites labeled "inappropriate" by the staff, unduly affected the computer access of students of color, boys, and especially boys of color. Though her study involves a very small group, her observations are compelling, especially when quotations appear to reveal the underlying prejudices of the white, middle class staff, who, for example, allow girls to comparison-shop on-line for prom dresses, but forbid the boys access to very popular athletic shoe and NBA websites. The interviews conducted by Brown show that the boys consider these restrictions to be racist, based on stereotypical preconceptions. The staff also outlaws any use of the school computers for gaming, regardless of the extent of other demand for the equipment. Various ethnic social websites, such as AsianAvenue or Cade?, are blocked for fear of email-carried viruses, though on Yahoo and MSN, the email function alone is blocked, and the other features can be accessed. Though she does not attribute all over-blocking to racism., her study indicates a serious need to examine the role of cultural assumptions and bias in regulating information access, and to

consider the impact of Internet restrictions at school on the lives and learning of students who may have access nowhere else.

In relation to LGBT students there are two separate issues with Internet filters. One is a lack of what filtering experts call “granularity”, when blocking algorithms are unable to make fine differentiations between, for example, non-pornographic material on gay sexuality provided for entertainment or social purposes, and material on safe sex or gay teen depression (Schneider, 1997). The Internet is now the preferred, primary method of acquiring new information for all teens, but, as Schrader and Wells (2005) point out, for gay teens, who may be isolated from supportive community by rural geography or hostile family environment, access to Internet information on sexuality and health may be a matter of life or death. One reason filters are problematic is that they frequently screen material by key word. The article cites a Kaiser study which found that even when set for maximum flexibility, most common filters blocked at least 10% of sites that conveyed legitimate information related to condoms and safe sex. At the most restrictive settings, the content related to sexual health could be blocked at rates as high as 50%.

The other, more disturbing filtering issue related to LGBT students is that numerous sources show some filtering software companies deliberately target LGBT sites for exclusion. Bromberg (2003) sums up this evidence in his Amicus Curia brief for *US v. ALA*. Some sites have treated the words ‘lesbian’ or ‘gay’ as inherently offensive, resulting in placing gay issue-focused sites on blocked lists. Others have routinely blocked, under the category ‘sex’, sites which deal with political and social issues such as the problem of harassment of gays, gay relationships, and even the television show *Queer as Folk*. The problem may be broader than homophobia. Nancy Willard (2007, July 20), an often-quoted national voice for Internet education and safety, recently posted “Further, I know of one filtering company, whose

product is used in public schools, that has a close working relationship with a major conservative religious organization.” Her 2002 article “Filtering Software: The Religious Connection” is a chilling report on the religious origins, connections, and agendas of eight major filtering software providers used in public schools. Not all overblocking is an error.

In an earlier decision the Court characterized schools as “the marketplace of ideas” (Lukenbill & Lukenbill, 2007). When filters are installed, librarians cede their role as creators of the school media collection to the vendors of filtering software. These vendors refuse to disclose what specific information is blocked. They may have values very different from those espoused in the mission of American schools and libraries—inarguably, their decisions are driven for the most part by financial concerns. Though certain minorities are more burdened by filtering, all students are affected—their education is compromised, and, at the very least, their time is wasted. Sutton (2006), in a study of student researchers at a suburban high school, found students uniformly in agreement with this statement. She also interviewed teachers, who reported that specific research topics, such as “censorship of films”, prove especially problematic and are sometimes avoided or abandoned for that reason. As a debate teacher, I struggle with overblocking all the time. Many of the most common, controversial topics used in competition—gun control, drug laws, tobacco use, alcohol and driving—are blocked at school. There can be no question concerning the necessity to continue action against blocking software.

The destructiveness of censorship can be subtle. Andy Carvin (2007, July) has a provocative posting on PBS Teachers. He traveled to Boston to give a presentation to teachers about 21st Century citizenship, which he planned to characterize, through use of YouTube,

Facebook, etc., as active, connected, creative, and responsible. When he attempted to display his presentation (*at the JFK Library!*), all his social sites were blocked as “inappropriate”.

The teachers laughed in recognition, and one told Carvin he needed a student there to proxy around the block for him. In a portion of her 2006 article on the Deleting Online Predators Act (DOPA), Willard discussed proxies. In a portion of the article, Willard addresses the now daily use by students (and teachers!) of proxies to circumvent blocking software. It was very enjoyable to learn in this article that the US Government itself actually funded the creation of an easy and effective proxy system: Circumventor, which was developed through the Voice of America for use by the citizens of oppressive regimes elsewhere, is now often needed and commonly used by high school students right here at home. As a teacher I am glad that my students are able to access appropriate material using proxies, and would never dream of ‘turning them in’ for this serious breach of school rules, but I dislike intensely the message we send in forcing students to this behavior and then pretending not to see it. If Carvin is right, and the values of 21st Century citizenship are embodied in the Internet, the values we uphold in tacitly relying on illegal proxies for student research are cynical. They are reminiscent of the Soviet citizen’s collection of strategies for surviving the deprivations of the repressive state. Respect for civil law and responsible authority is undermined—and for what? As this paper turns from listing the harms of filtering toward a consideration of best action, do not forget—the things don’t even work. The Free Expression Policy Project (and EFF) agrees with many experts that, in addition to egregious overblocking, filters also under-block--that is, they fail to identify and block many pornographic sites, especially, currently, pop-up ads. They are also “brittle”, according to the NRC report, meaning that when they do fail, they fail “catastrophically” (Thornburgh & Lin, 2002).

What to Do?

A study of school library media specialists conducted by Lukenbill & Lukenbill (2007) found that in a representative sampling these librarians had very weak knowledge of the court cases which govern intellectual freedom in schools. The study found that a majority of these librarians would accept an order from an administrator to remove a book from library shelves, though the majority would not be happy about it. This research showed that librarians were very influenced by how they wished to be seen in their schools and communities. When I interviewed my school librarian, Nancy McEnery, on December 5, 2008, she told me she had never been contacted regarding the filter installed for our school district, which was done on the server at the county level. She volunteered that the filter was “a huge pain”. When Sutton interviewed teachers regarding Internet filtering, they told her they had “never been asked what they thought about filters or how they should be used” (p.53). Auld (2003), who found that “filters work”, had one computer in his library which was not filtered available at all times. He also had staff willing and able at all times to override an inappropriate block, and this option was well publicized to library patrons. In school libraries, the knowledge that the block can be overridden is not common among students or teachers. The librarians, appointed as guardians of civil liberties by the American Library Association, and the teachers, charged with inculcating democratic values and critical thinking in their students, often don’t even know how the filtering system got there—when they want to go around the filters, many of them turn to their students. In handing down the unfortunate decision on CIPA, the Court relied on the librarian’s ability to override the block as the preserver of constitutional protections. The only good thing about this sorry state of intellectual freedom in our schools is that it creates fertile ground for a challenge to *US v. ALA*.

Until that day, while there are still filtering systems in our schools, librarians and teachers should be more active in protecting students' intellectual freedom. Here are the best steps you can take as an educator to ameliorate the unfortunate effects of blocking:

1. Find out who is making the purchasing decision on filter systems for your district or county and install yourself on that committee. In my experience, there will be no one on that committee but two tired IT guys and someone from finance. There's no secret plot in school districts to keep teachers and librarians off these committees—they just don't know that anyone is interested, and can't believe anyone is willing to do it.
2. Arm yourself with the work of Lori Ayre. Print out her *Library Software Filters (2008)* survey, and take it to the purchasing committee. She will differentiate between the different systems for you—some are much worse than others. On some systems, keyword blocking can be disabled. Some systems allow blocking override by password; others will only allow this from an administrative level. Nancy Schneider, also an excellent, if technologically dated source with which to intimidate your IT person, writes that a filter which is useful and appropriate for the library should:
 - Block what you want it to—and only what, where, and when you want it to
 - Let you see what's blocked
 - Let you change what's blocked
 - Not create extra work or muck with your computer system (p.20)

Ceding control of what enters the library to your district tech person is like letting the guy who delivers the boxes of books decide what to buy. As long as there are filters, they should be chosen by school librarians and teachers. You can make this happen. In the meantime:

3. Acquire and use your site's blocking override code. I learned about the passwords through this research, and it took me weeks of repeated requests to get one. The tech liaison "forgot"; they "only give it to people who need it"; she "had to check with the district". I mentioned one day how the Supreme Court had stressed the importance of the override in preserving students' rights *so there would not be a lawsuit*; I had it the next day. The biggest fear of those who held the code was that I would give it to students. The tech people seem to be the last to know that students don't need the override anymore. Don't give the code to students; it will be changed right away if you do. DO let your students know that you are willing and able to legally unblock for them.
4. Speaking of proxies: go to Peacefire.org and acquire an assortment of functioning proxies—why should students have all the fun? If that override code you worked so hard to get is changed the next week, <https://pagewash> will get you through the day.

What Next?

Filters and CIPA predate the social networking revolution. Many school now worry more about the stranger danger and social challenges of MySpace and YouTube than they do about porn sites. Stephens (2007) writes movingly about the educational possibilities of Web 2.0, with its possibilities for collaboration, communication, and creativity. The potential of these online resources for schools, he observes, will never be realized without some sort of trust between students and adults. Lamb (2007) urges teachers and librarians to be advocates for intellectual freedom in seeking meaningful applications of social networking in education. If the early Internet was a frontier town, social technology is a new planet. The old ways of thinking about technology and education will have to change

in the face of these new realities. In 2002 the NRC report concluded that, for monitoring student behavior and learning, no machine would ever be able to replace the supervision and support of a caring adult. Those who thought that this task could be left to software are now re-thinking this decision. Filters may not be as bad as some have feared, but they are “bad enough”. Heins, Cho, and Feldman (2006) wrote “Although some may say that the debate is over and that filters are now a fact of life, it is never too late to rethink bad policy choices”.

Nancy Willard (2007) has always been a proponent of Internet literacy education. In discussing unfiltered Web 2.0 she lists five key elements of such education, including adequate supervision and monitoring, meaningful consequences for misuse, and education for all students in appropriate, immediate responses to accidental access to porn. In October Lori Ayre (2008) praised the proposed Broadband Data Improvement Act (S.1492) on her web site. This act would require schools receiving e-rate to educate their students about online safety, sexual predators, and cyber bullying, and requires the FTC to "carry out a national public awareness program focused on educating children how to use the internet in safe and responsible ways." Thornburgh and Lin summed it up well in the 2002 NRC report: “Swimming pools can be dangerous for children. To protect them, one can install locks, put up fences, and deploy pool alarms. All these measures are helpful, but by far the most important thing that one can do for one’s children is to teach them to swim.”

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